



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



HONORING OUR HEROES LEGACY

Throughout our nation's history, the freedoms we enjoy have been won and protected by an elite group who understand the greatest and most selfless love. The men and women of our armed forces risk the ultimate sacrifice to protect fellow Americans and citizens of the world from tyranny and oppression. Every time they put on the uniform, these heroes renew their commitment to pay any price, to bear any burden, so that we might be free.

Memorial Day was born of compassion and empathy for those who courageously gave their lives to safeguard us and our way of life.

Oliver Wendell Holmes called this "our most sacred holiday," and he urged that "we do not ponder with sad thoughts the passing of our heroes, but to rather ponder their legacy – the life they made possible for us by their commitment and their pain."

They paid the ultimate price for freedom, and it is our duty to keep their legacy fresh in the memories of future generations.

This Memorial Day, veterans service organizations, community leaders and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will host hundreds of services across the state.

With pride and gratitude, let us attend one of these programs to remember great and brave Americans -- to recognize their valor and rejoice in the blessings their bravery secured. We know nothing of their individual thoughts and feelings as they met their fate. But we know they died for a cause greater than self.

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SDDVA Memorial Day programs - Monday, May 30:

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Memorial Day program will be held in Hot Springs (2500 Minnekahta Avenue) - 10:00 am (MT).

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Memorial Day program will be held in Sioux Falls (25965 477th Avenue) at 10:00 am (CT). River Cities Public Transit will be providing transportation to and from the program originating from the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street) starting at 8:30 am and will return attendees to the Alliance following the ceremony. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs with them.

VA IMPLEMENTS COVID-19 HEALTH PROTECTION LEVELS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Health Administration launched three operational levels called VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels to provide a consistent, nationwide approach at its medical centers.

The VA applied the three-tier safety protocol standard effective May 23, enhancing safety for veterans, visitors, and employees during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The levels align with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Community Transmission Levels](#) designed for use by health care facilities.

“The VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels provide transparent and flexible guidelines for local facilities to help veterans and staff know what to expect when entering a facility, despite the unpredictability of COVID-19,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Health, performing the delegable duties of the Under Secretary for Health Steven L. Lieberman, M.D. “This allows VHA facilities to provide maximum reliable access to safe, timely and quality care by adjusting safety protocols based on the fluctuation of COVID-19 levels in the community.”

Each VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Level includes guidance on personal protective equipment, screening, testing, visitation, waiting rooms, group care/therapy, and staffing.

The levels are on a low, medium, to high scale as described below:

- Low (when community transmission level is low): Visitors are welcome, self-screening allowed and physical distancing not required.
- Medium (when community transmission level is medium or substantial): Care partners are welcome, self-screening allowed and physical distancing not required.
- High (when community transmission level is high): Visitors are limited to the discretion of the care team on a case-by-case basis, facilities may choose to screen at the door and physical distancing required.

Masking and employee screening testing, as applicable, will remain in effect at all VHA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels and consistent with CDC guidance for health care facilities. The VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels do not impact current requirements regarding testing and masking for employees.

Levels will be monitored weekly at each facility and updated to reflect any changes on Mondays. VHA will notify veterans and staff by displaying signage at all facility entrances, updating levels on their local facility websites, and social media. All medical center voicemails will include VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels as well.

Use the [VA medical center locator](#) to find its current level and learn more about [VHA Health Protection Levels](#).

STATE ID'S REQUIRED FOR MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHTS

Does a VA Card work for boarding on the Midwest Honor Flights? NO!

Veterans are made aware of this prior to each of the flights but a reminder never hurts for those flying soon or those who have just applied.

Veterans and guardians **MUST** have a valid ID for boarding - VA Cards do not have date of birth or an expiration date. Acceptable IDs include:


- Driver's licenses or other state photo identity cards issued by Department of Motor Vehicles (or equivalent)
- U.S. passport
- U.S. passport card
- DHS trusted traveler cards (Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, FAST)
- U.S. Department of Defense ID, including IDs issued to dependents
- Permanent resident card
- State-issued Enhanced Driver's License
- An acceptable photo ID issued by a [federally recognized](#), Tribal Nation/Indian Tribe
- Foreign government-issued passport
- Canadian provincial driver's license or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada card
- Transportation worker identification credential
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Employment Authorization Card (I-766)
- U.S. Merchant Mariner Credential
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC).

Learn more about accepted IDs for boarding by visiting <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification>.

DOES MY VA CARD WORK FOR BOARDING?

NO!

You **MUST** have a valid ID for boarding - VA Cards do not have your DOB or an expiration date. Acceptable IDs include a state issued Driver's License (REAL ID compliant as of May 3, 2023), a valid passport (US or foreign), or passport card.



VA LAUNCHES \$20 MILLION INNOVATION CHALLENGE TO REDUCE VETERAN SUICIDE

As part of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' [10-year strategy](#) to reduce veteran suicide, the VA invites innovators across the country to participate in Mission Daybreak — a \$20 million challenge designed to help the VA develop new suicide prevention strategies for veterans.

Those interested are encouraged to submit their detailed concept papers via missiondaybreak.net to the VA no later than July 8, 2022.

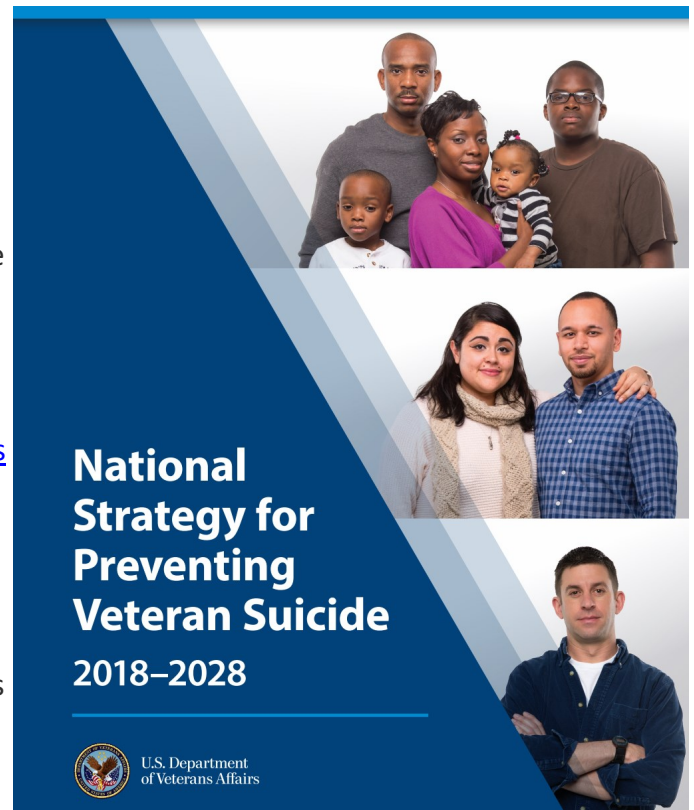
The effort supports the goals of President Biden's Unity Agenda and aligns with the priority goals and implementation principles of the White House strategy on reducing military and veteran suicide.

"To end veteran suicide, we need to use every tool available," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "In the most recent [National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#) more than 45,000 American adults died by suicide — including 6,261 veterans. That's why Mission Daybreak is fostering solutions across a broad spectrum of focus areas to combat this preventable problem."

Proposed solutions for Mission Daybreak should seek to address one or more of the designated [challenge focus areas](#) outlined in the Mission Daybreak webpage. During Phase 1 all challenge participants will have access to a collection of open data, surveys, and reports on veteran suicide prevention as they prepare their concept papers. Innovators and collaborators are also invited to join the Mission Daybreak solver community, which helps solvers expand and augment their teams with interdisciplinary expertise.

To learn more and hear from experts, solvers are encouraged to [register for the upcoming virtual information session and topical webinars](#). Forty teams will receive awards ranging from \$100,000 to \$3 million which will be distributed across two phases.

Visit missiondaybreak.net for more information on the challenge.





Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Caregiver Support and Suicide Prevention Programs Present:

The 3rd Annual Caregiver Support Summit

When: Wednesday, June 22nd, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Theme: Suicide Prevention Care for Caregivers and Veterans.
Information on VA programs and their intersection with the VA's Suicide Prevention efforts.

Where: The event will be held virtually.

Who is it for: For community partners only. No caregivers will be present, only VA and community professionals.

Topics Include:

- Caregiver Support Program
 - Peer Support Program
- Behavioral Recovery Outreach team
- Serious Mental Illness Case Management Program
 - Suicide Prevention Program

RSVP: Nic Brokenleg, CSW-PIP
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SDDVA OUTREACH

SDDVA had the honor to participate in the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate honoring ceremony for Vietnam Veterans last Friday.

Keynote speakers for the event were: SWO TVSO Geri Opsal, Tribal Chairman Delbert Hopkins, SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock, and Medal of Honor recipient Michael J. Fitzmaurice.

Also, participating in the event were: Spink County VSO Steve Wollman, Roberts County VSO Angela Beacom, Marshall County VSO Dave Daberkow, and SDDVA Field Service Officer Guy Arnold.

A special “shout out” to Geri for a great job in coordinating and hosting this wonderful honoring ceremony.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 30—Memorial Day Program—SD Veterans Cemetery—(25965 477th Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
- May 30—Memorial Day Program—Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home —(2500 Minnekahta Avenue)—Hot Springs—10:00 am (MT)
- May 30—BHNC Memorial Day Ceremonies—(20901 Pleasant Valley Drive)—Sturgis—11:00 am and 1:00 pm (MT)
- May 30—State Offices Closed
- Jun 1—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 10
- Jun 1—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 10 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—
Doors open at 7:30 pm and program at 9:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 9-12—State VFW Convention—4-H Fairgrounds—(3200 W Havens Avenue)—Mitchell

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 12—Midwest Honor Flight Annual Honor Ride—SD Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls
Jun 14—Flag Day
Jun 16-19—State American Legion Conference—Watertown
Jun 18—Midwest Honor Flight 3rd Reunion—Sioux Falls Convention Center—11:00 am (CT)
Jun 19—Father's Day
Jun 25—Lake County Abate Poker Run for Midwest Honor Flight
Jun 20—State Offices Closed
Jun 29-Jul 4—Parkston's Celebration of Freedom—City Park—Parkston
Jul 4—Independence Day
Jul 9—Sioux Falls Canaries Military Night
Jul 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)
Jul 18-23—National Veterans Golden Age Games—Sioux Falls
Aug 6-9—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 14-19—Military Order of the Purple Heart National Convention—Rapid City
Aug 15-17—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School
Aug 18-23—USS Iowa Veterans Association Reunion—Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center—Rapid City
Aug 22—The Barrel House Day of Giving fundraiser for Midwest Honor Flight—Sioux Falls
Sep 1—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair
Sep 1-5—South Dakota State Fair
Sep 5—Labor Day
Sep 10—Heroes Helping with Horsepower Military Appreciation Event—W. Main Street—Ethan—Festivities begin at 8:00 am (CT)
Sep 14-17—Black Hills Veterans March
Oct 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)
Oct 10—Native American Day
Oct 15—Midwest Honor Flight Fifth Annual Hangar Dance—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
Nov 5—We've Got Your Six Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day
Nov 24—Thanksgiving Day
Dec 6—Governor's Budget Address
Dec 17—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—Christmas
Jan 10—Governor's State of the State Address

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South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>

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